

PROJECT NAME: Esoteric Fraternity Property – Due Diligence Studies**2. Project Summary**

Award of the requested Strategic Opportunity Grant will support acquisition of this property, ownership of which will result in a variety of improvements. Such improvements will include water-quality enhancements through fuel-load reduction and trail/road maintenance, preventing runoff into Clipper Creek and the North Fork of the American River. Additionally, the award will support the County's steps toward acquisition to secure a historical resource that presents unique recreational, historical, and public safety opportunities. The cost estimate to engage and complete a variety of studies that will facilitate real property negotiation and determine the scope of future site improvements is \$63,000. These include: trail and road assessment with respect to erosion control, appraisal, phase I site assessment, Architectural Historical Survey, oral living-history interview and documentation, and artifact / book inventory and condition assessment. We have \$10,000 pledged to the effort by the Placer Legacy program. We have dedicated \$13,000 of in-kind County staff time. The total grant being requested is \$40,000. The total project budget is \$63,000.

The Esoteric Fraternity property is comprised of one 89.0 acre parcel, which sits on the west rim of the American River Canyon in Applegate. The parcel abuts BLM land in the canyon to the east, and is connected to the river by an existing trail network. These trails were established through volunteer efforts by the Meadow Vista Trail Alliance, and over time, the trails and existing, on-site roads have become rutted by run-off depositing sediment into the Clipper Creek and the North Fork of the American River. As public access to the American River from Applegate is limited, acquisition of this property not only offers a remarkable opportunity to address those access limits, but to improve and maintain the trails and roads, and establish erosion control measures to protect the quality of local waterways.

The Esoteric Fraternity property was purchased from Leland Stanford in 1892 and was established as a retreat to accommodate members and their monotype printing and book-binding operation, distribution of which was world wide. The residence and print shop were constructed from on-site clay and lumber materials, and contain historical artifacts that embody the history of this unique fraternal organization including: one-of-a-kind/first edition books, turn-of-the-century furnishings, a monotype printing press, and assorted book production equipment. This site is a strong candidate for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Sites, and for designation as a California State Landmark. Coupled with this, the opportunities for fire-safety improvements and trails-access to the river make this the highest rated property that the Placer Legacy program has considered.

The sole surviving member of the Esoteric Fraternity is Fred Peterson, a man in his early 70's, who embodies the history of this undocumented group. The completion of oral history, architectural survey, and item inventory studies are needed to capture the history of this unique group.

The County is in the process of negotiating to secure this resource through fee-title acquisition. Successful acquisition of this site will result in the following positive actions and effects: 1) trail and road improvement for access and watershed protection, 2) fuel load reduction for safety and watershed protection, 3) conservation of the property, 4) preservation of the history: physical and oral, and 5) public access for historical education and to trailheads that lead to the American River.

The funding being requested through the SNC grant will facilitate pre-acquisition studies by: 1) assessing the trail and road conditions and identifying erosion issues that impact the water quality of Clipper Creek and the North Fork of the American River, and 2) assessing and addressing the preservation of the structures, artifacts, and oral history.